III

SHENG SHIH-TS'AI AND THE "NEW NEW DOMINION"

When Sheng Shih-ts'ai was offered direction of Sinkiang destinies, history began to record a courageous new chapter—for long a secret and maligned one—in the annals of human emancipation. For Sheng urged that the province discard the old-style dependency tradition and, by adopting a great new six-point charter, cast in her lot with progress. By his Six Great Policies he aimed at reviving long-submerged cultural aspirations of Sinkiang native races and at bringing about revolutionary Sinkiang reconstruction. This he tried to do within the limits of nominal control of the Chinese Republic, at the price of favoring "radical" Soviet ideas, and at the cost of offending other less far-sighted Chinese, as well as many assertedly "foreign imperialist" interests. He has, in brief, made the province into a New Sinkiang *(Hsin Hsin-chiang)*, a remarkable "New New Dominion."

Sheng, a moderate-sized, handsome man, with an exceptionally full crop of dark hair and a thick, descending mustache, started out for the region late in the 1920's. Yang Tseng-hsin, warlord master of the province since abdication of the Manchu Dynasty, had been assassinated in July, 1928, and his place taken by the weak, avaricious Chin Shu-jen. Provincial General Secretary Lu Hsüeh-tsu had gone from Sinkiang to Nanking on business, and had been requested by Chin to look around while there for a man of military background possibly suited to build up the army of the frontier province. Sheng Shih-ts'ai was the man Lu selected.

Born in K'ai-yüan county of Liaoning, Manchuria, in 1893, Sheng Shih-ts'ai had been reared "in a small family" and amid conditions of "poverty" and "cold." How he managed an education with such meager resources is not clear, but he attended primary and middle schools, and even had some university training in Nanking. There he studied European history under Chang Chi-luan, the late editor of China's most famous newspaper, *Ta Kung Pao*. Sheng never seems to have forgot-

ten his old teacher, and that is probably one of the reasons that the *Ta Kung Pao* has often been able to reveal more information concerning the New Sinkiang than other Chinese journals. 643

Though Sheng started out to be a student of the arts, the trend of events in China led him, midway in his career, to study military science also. It was after a period of attendance at a university in Japan—where he and his biographer, Tu Chung-yüan, became friends—that Sheng returned to China and entered the then famous military academy at Shaokwan (Ch'ü-chiang) in Kwangtung Province. Li Ken-yüan, an old-time Yünnan militarist-revolutionary, was in charge and guided the young student through the academic ropes. On graduation, Sheng was given an introduction to Kuo Sung-ling, one of the prominent war lords of his native Northeast China.

General Kuo made Sheng a *Hsiao P'ai Chang* (Second Lieutenant) and rapidly promoted him until he became a *Ying Chang* (Battalion Commander). Then he was permitted another period of study, this time in a Japanese military academy. He had not been in Japan long, however, when he was called back to China to join in a military *Putsch*. It failed, and as a consequence General Kuo was killed. Sheng, having lost his benefactor and himself become involved in difficulties, returned to Japan "to read books." While there he received financial backing from none other than Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. As a consequence, it is said, he has since referred to himself as "The Student" when signing telegraph messages addressed to the Chinese national leader.

Soon after his Japanese military training had been completed, Sheng Shih-ts'ai joined the Generalissimo in the northward march against the war lords of Pei-p'ing or Peking as it was then called. He was shortly given a post in the office of the Chinese General Staff but was not happy there and decided to try his luck on the Chinese frontier. On first thought, probably due to his past tutelage under a Yünnanese schoolmaster at Ch'ü-chiang, he considered going to Yünnan. The attractions of the vaster and richer territory of Sinkiang, however, ultimately won him.

Not the most pleasant introduction to Sinkiang awaited Sheng. He 643 175

643 had met Lu Hsüeh-tsu in Nanking through the offices of a mutual
175 friend, and Lu was persuaded to recommend him to the Sinkiang Military Governor. But when Chin Shu-jen learned of Sheng's background he seemed to fear to take him on; Chin wanted a subordinate, not a possible rival. It was only through third party pressure that Chin agreed to give Sheng his chance. Then, just as the young appointee was about to leave Eastern China, Sino-Russian hostilities over the Chinese Eastern Railway broke out and interrupted normal air transport through Soviet Russia via Vladivostok. Since it was by that route that Sheng had planned to travel, he was forced to spend eight months in Peiping "reading" again until communications were restored. When the line was at last reopened, he flew through Siberia to his destination; there he was temporarily lodged as a guest of Lu Hsüeh-tsu, who had been his traveling companion. But Sheng did not get to see Chin Shu-jen until over a week had passed; for Lu and the military governor had had a quarrel almost as soon as Lu arrived.

At last Sheng was assigned a position with the General Staff in the Office of the Border Defense Commander of Sinkiang. Not a particularly attractive "boost" for one with Sheng's background, the assignment found him nevertheless immediately setting to his tasks. By 1930 he had worked himself up to the position of Chief of the General Staff in the Office; then, when revolt broke out in Ha-mi, he was made Commander-in-Chief at the Front.

175 Chin Shu-jen, a man weaker than those before him and yet covetously
669 retaining the old exploitation methods, had attempted to monopolize taxes on Sinkiang foreign trade and had given his sons extensive regional authority. This combination had caused such resentment that, apparently with some Japanese instigation filtering in through Mongolia, it surged up in a swelling tide and flung the waves of civil war over the province. The incident which finally precipitated his downfall came with the death of the Mohammedan Prince of Qomul in 1930.

Qomul, the Moslem city known to Chinese as Ha-mi, as late as 1930 had been still under only nominal Chinese suzerainty. But when its prince died his son was "received" into Chinese protective custody; then the ancient principality of Qomul was legally abolished and the region

661 trate or as a tax collector, it was only desired that he collect eighty to one hundred thousand dollars in a year's work. Can one ask that a man's talents be developed in this type of government atmosphere? Since the culture of other peoples of Sinkiang had been submerged so much, the Han official became like a god, and if a magistrate were appointed for a county in South Sinkiang he need not have been especially greedy to receive fifty to sixty thousand from the Moslems on one visit. Therefore all people coming to Sinkiang from the interior had such hopes. But now it is not possible!

The "Clean Government" of the New Sinkiang

In the face of provincial discontent over the old Sinkiang administrative system, Sheng Shih-ts'ai set about in 1933 to institute reforms. It would have been surprising indeed if prevalent and all too customary Chinese foibles—of "squeeze," "rotten gentry," and excessive taxes, for instance—had been completely eradicated under his policy of "Clean Government." Since almost no first-hand data, such as reports from any long-time Occidental resident in the province, are available it may be some time before what may or may not have been accomplished along these lines can be fully known. But so far as Tu Chung-yüan is concerned, the changes have already been praiseworthy. Former abuses concerning salaries, "gifts," and taxes by office-holders in the province have been checked, he says, by a provincial commission which is required to enter accounts in regard to all public moneys in the records of Sheng Shih-ts'ai's own office. Sheng himself has set a leading example in governmental unselfishness, according to Tu, by accepting a monthly salary of less than $100 Chinese for his work. Mrs. Sheng, an administrator of a girls' middle school, is held before the reader's eyes as a model also because she gets a monthly salary of only about $10 Chinese. Such examples, Tu points out, are in sharp contrast with the practices of past administrators.

643 In regard to the type of administration in the New Sinkiang, this much can be also said. The province is governed under a "committee" system similar to that in other provinces of China. Members of a provincial committee are appointed by the Executive Yüan of the Chinese National Government, which also ratifies the appointment of one

individual from among their number to the office of Concurrent Provincial Chairman. Sheng Shih-ts'ai was appointed to that post in 1940, and he has given it more and more of his attention since the decease of the former Provincial Chairman, Liu Wen-lung. Actually, so far as power is concerned, Sheng Shih-ts'ai seems to have dominated Sinkiang since 1933 through his military strength; the effective participation of other members in the provincial committee seems to have largely been subject to his approval, and in many respects the ratification of his and their appointments by national authorities has been mostly a matter of form. 643

Statements as to the administrative organization of Sinkiang areas do not always jibe. But Tu Chung-yüan writes, and other authorities seem to substantiate, that there are nine principal administrative regions in the province: Tihwa Ch'ü (including the capital of the same name), I-li Ch'ü, T'a Ch'eng Ch'ü, Ha-mi Ch'ü, A Shan Ch'ü, Yen-ch'i Ch'ü, K'o-shih Ch'ü, and Khotan Ch'ü. According to Tu there are administrative officers over these, each of which includes a number of counties. There are, he states, seventy-two counties in all Sinkiang. 631

It is hard to tell how effectively this *Ch'ü* and *Hsien* (Region and County) system has been working in Sinkiang. In the past such governmental forms have worked better in the oasis settlements than in the outlying pastures, but have on the whole been subordinated to varying local tribal customs when the two systems came into practical conflict. Where relations between provincial officials and non-Chinese-speaking races have become too complicated, native headmen speaking Chinese have in the past served as "middlemen." 642

So far as the national allegiance of Sinkiang is concerned, let any doubts be immediately dispelled. The name of the province indicates that it is a part of the territory subject to the laws of the Chinese National Government and the officials and people of both Sinkiang and the Chinese Republic as a whole operate accordingly. Both as Commander-in-Chief of Border Defense and as Provincial Chairman in Sinkiang Sheng Shih-ts'ai is formally an appointee of the Executive Yüan of the Chinese National Government. The fact that he is allotted and accepts such national titles is significant evidence that neither he

/Chinese, Chinese Moslems and Sedentary Tibetans/

apparent trade of innkeeping was simply a cover for another and more lucrative business." (p. 73).

Like the Chinese, the sinicized Moslems are very much concerned with the problem of offspring. To them continuity of life is bound up with that prolongation of existence which a son secures, one who carries on the life which he owes to his parents. This is a completely Chinese concept. The Chinese-speaking Moslems cannot understand and would certainly not accept the Christian faith that life after death is God's gift, that one does not depend upon a son and his worship, and that immortality means the soul or spirit living eternally in Heaven. Miss Cable records in her book: "We talked often of these things, but it was hard for them to understend what I told them, and they would turn it off with one excuse or another. 'She is different from us', they said, 'her life is given up to God's work and her merit will secure her an entrance to Paradise'. Some envied, some pitied, some just stared and made no effort to understand, others summed it up in these words: 'Eastern ways are for the East, Western ways are for the West.'" (p. 75).

The Chinese-speaking Moslems in the Northwest, in spite of their having taken up a considerable amount of the Chinese way of life, are deeply conscious of racial and religious inadaptability to Chinese rules. Most of them are always rebellious. They alwasy think that they are oppressed or unfairly treated by the Chinese authorities. For this reason, Moslem revolts occur in the Northwest frequently. For example, the immediate cause of the the 1930 revolt was, according to Miss Cable's account, the suspicion of the Moslems that the Chinese Government was to change their age-old social and political system and that the Chinese population in the area goat many advantages at the expense of the Moslems. Up to 1930 the Moslems in the Hami district of Sinkiang were always governed by a ruler of their own race, religion and speech. The last one of their rulers was Khan Maksud Shah. This ruler died during the year 1930. The Chinese Sinkiang Government took this opportunity to end the Moslem system and the succession of the Khan was not allowed to continue. Maksud's son, Nazir, heir to the throne was summoned to report at Urumchi, then capital of the Sinkiang Provincial Government, and Yolbars, the Tiger Prince, was ordered to appear with him. This was bad news for the Moslem inhabitants. Later, a word came from the capital that the young prince had been made a prisoner in his own lodging, and that there were to be many changes in the standing of the Turki people. When Yolbars returned to Hami he left Nazir in Urumchi, and arrived in company with a band of Chinese officials who at once sat down to business and drew up a list of changes which were to be introduced in the administration of the Moslem community. The old administration

/Chinese, Chinese Moslems and Sedentary Tibetans/

S 563 642 643 177 829 The old administration of the Khan was not always liked by the Moslems, but he and his people were one, and they understood each other well. His Oriental style of court life was appreciated by the Turkis, and the Khan, by virtue of his hereditary title, was unquestionably accepted by them. There was immediate resentment among the populace at the suggested changes, and the resentment became the more bitter when a great display of highly organized officialdom was made.

S 563 177 631 642 829 [423] At the same time, the whole area of Hami was carefully surveyed and the land redistributed. Three large administrative districts were arranged and given names which dated back to the Han dynasty. The new government was to be wholly in Chinese hands, and the old Khanate system was to vanish. Chinese magistrates were appointed to hear the law cases and Chinese tax-collectors were to levy the dues and convey them to the capital, where they would be allocated to the respective departments. These propositions all seem legitimate to the Chinese authority and they were presented to the people as improved measures of justice; but the Moslems did not like them and had a great deal of suspicion towards them. There was also the rumor that some unappropriated land which the Turki farmers would have liked to use was given to the Chinese and that arrears of taxes from which the Chinese were exempt were demanded from Moslem landowners.

S [669] Suddenly that dangerous thing so well known to the Oriental as a "breath of fury" rose fiercely among men who had hitherto dealt only with their own Khan, and they unanimously determined on revolt.

N 829 565 Fan Ch'ang-chiang, a well-known journalist connected with the most influential Chinese daily Ta Kung Pao in the prewar period and now editor of the People's Daily in Peking, reported, after a trip to the Northwest in 1936 through Shensi, Kansu, Chinghai, and Ninghsia, that the common people, especially the peasants in

N [651] Kansu, all had a very bad impression of the government. Because there were so many kinds of taxes, the people thought that the government had nothing to do but to collect taxes from the common

N 565 181 562 829 people. The people did not trust the government. In regard to social customs Fan says that the Chinese in Kansu are very conservative in matters which have anything to do with their women. Even middle-aged women of respectable families can hardly have anny opportunity to be seen by or to be spoken to by any man who is not a relative or a neighbor. Young ladies must absolutely not be seen by strangers. Soldiers who have come from the coastal provinces and who are accustomed to more liberal relations between the two sexes were resented by the local people because

N 565 829 181 they acted rather freely toward their women folk. Notwithstanding their bad impression of the government and their resentment toward the "outside" soldiers, the common Chinese in Kansu are

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159 Government and their readiness to receive orders from the new
668 regime in Peiping. On October 1, 1949, General T'ao Ch'ih-
669 yueh, the commander of the Nationalist garrison in Sinkiang,
631 went to Chiu-ch'uan to welcome the arrival of the Communist general, Wang, Chen, in Sinkiang. On October 2, General P'ang Te-huai flew to Urumchi (Tihua) with General Chang Chih-chung. Burkhan was thus appointed by the Communist regime as the new governor of the people's government of Sinkiang. In October
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[643] 1955, he was elected chairman of the Sinkiang-Uighur Autonomous Region.

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159 Burkhan was a member of the NW MAC, but unlike most of
668 the other officials, he held few concurrent posts. Those he held
631 were president of the Sinkiang College of Nationalities, an institution for the training of native cadres, chairman of the Chinese Islamic Association, and a member of the Chinese People's Committee for the Protection of Children. His name was missing from the list of notables invited to attend the CPPCC held in Peking in September, 1949, and it was not until the third session of the CPPCC in 1951 that he became a delegate to that body. In 1955, he was deputy chairman of the Second National Committee of the CPPCC, the function of which had already been superceded by the National People's Congress. His name was also absent from the list of members of the presidium of the National People's Congress meeting, held in September 1954.

These facts as well as reports from escapees from Sinkiang indicate that Burkhan was probably only a figurehead in the political structure of Sinkiang under the Communists. In his speeches, however, he has denounced the separatist aspirations of his peoples as well as pan-Turkestanism and pan-Islamism, long unifying forces in the struggle of the Turkish peoples of Sinkiang, and has repeatedly and vigorously supported the unity of Sinkiang with the rest of China. He was also one of the vice-presidents of the Sino-Soviet Friendship Association. He relinquished the office as governor of Sinkiang in September 1955, but when, a month later, Saifuddin resigned, he became governor of the Sinkiang-Uighur Autonomous Region.

N Cha Hsi: Tibetan, Communist
159 Cha Hsi, a Tibetan, served as a member of the Committee
*668 of Nationalities during the period of Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia
631 Border Government from 1937-1945; at the end of 1949, he was appointed a member of the same committee in the Central People's Government, and also appointed a member of the Military and Political Council for the Northwest and concurrently a member of the Committee of Nationalities in that council. The council was re-organized in 1953 into the Northwest Administrative

159 669 Ma Chung-ying, attacked Qomul (Hami) and Barkol (Chensi) from Kansu Province. Sheng was appointed chief of staff to the Pacification Commander in the eastern region of Sinkiang. Sheng's military training and his experience gained in the Northern Expedition proved him superior to the rebels. When the rebels were defeated, Sheng was promoted to the chief of staff in the headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief of Frontier Defense. In 1932 when the revolts among the Moslems started again in the eastern region of Sinkiang, Sheng was appointed as Pacification Commander in that region. He put down the disturbances in Qomul, relieved Urumchi (Tihua), besieged by the Moslems, and recovered a number of cities such as Turfan and Fu-kang. His reputation and prestige were soon recognized by the peoples of Sinkiang. Finally in 1933, a conspiracy broke out to oppose the administration of Governor Chin Shu-jen. Taking this opportunity, Sheng joined forces with the "revolutionaries." As a result, Governor Chin fled and Sheng was appointed as the Provisional Commander-in-Chief of Frontier Defense. In September of the same year, Sheng was officially appointed as the Frontier Commander of the Central Government in Nanking.

159 669 648 The immediate tasks facing this new leader of Sinkiang were the quelling of insurrections led by General Chang P'ei-yuan of Ili and the rebel Ma Chung-ying of Qomul. To consolidate his newly acquired power, Sheng had to obtain outside help to suppress his internal troubles. So in October 1933, Sheng sent his representatives to Soviet Russia to negotiate with the Russian government for the Red Army to enter Sinkiang and help him. The Soviet Red Army entered Sinkiang in 1933, and by June 1934 the whole of northern Sinkiang was pacified. After the successful conclusion of this military achievement, 159 648 Sheng Shih-ts'ai allied himself further with Soviet Russia by signing the first secret agreement with the Russian government, on May 26, 1934. The main terms in this secret treaty included the loan of five million rubles to Sheng by the Soviet Union and the employment of Russian advisors and technicians by the Sinkiang government.

(643) During the next ten years, 1933 to 1942, Sheng became absolute ruler of Sinkiang with the full support of the Soviet Union. 159 64 Immediately after he took over, Sheng proclaimed his eight-point policy: (1) racial equality, (2) freedom of religion, (3) agricultural relief, (4) financial reform, (5) political reform, (6) promotion of education, (7) self-government and (8) improvement of the judicial system. In 1935 he made known his famous "six policies" which would be followed as the guiding principles of his "reconstruction of a new Sinkiang." These six policies were: (1) anti-imperialism, (2) kinship with the Soviet Union, (3) racial equality, (4) peace, (5) honest administration and (6)